

Governor's Proposed FY23 Budget Adjustments
Appropriations Hearing
HB 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Thursday, February 24th, 2022

Crystal Piette

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan, Representative Nolan, Senator Miner, Representative France, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Crystal Piette and I am a registered voter in East Hartford.

I am here to testify in regard to share my grave concerns over the proposed budget for DMHAS.

I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety. I have physical ailments that cause me difficulty in my everyday life. Before getting help from InterCommunity for mental health and primary care, I was at rock bottom. My son and I had been abused by an ex. I wasn't comfortable going out to socialize or receive help from anyone. I was stuck in a dark place. After receiving care and support services from InterCommunity, my life has changed for the better. Some days are harder than others, but not it's not every day. Now I have a case manager, primary care doctor, clinician, and the support of a clubhouse. Without these factors my life would be completely different. My sister has recently come into some medical issues and is no longer able to drive or work like she used to. We need help.

In that light I would like to commend Governor Lamont for:

- Providing \$1.4 million in additional resources for respite bed services for people coming out of or being diverted from incarceration. However, not enough support is being provided for those that are being released from incarceration. The system sets them up with nothing, which typically leads them right back into jail. They need community support, housing, recovery services, behavioral and mental health support and primary care to help break this exploitive cycle.
- Preserving the allocation for Supportive Housing Services – along with investment in the Department of Housing budget for 350 units of additional affordable housing and \$2.8 million to fund supportive housing services). This is great work, but there is a larger amount of people who need affordable housing than what's been provided. Often, the affordable housing available may be in a not so safe neighborhood, which is unfair. There also needs to be more assistance with obtaining affordable housing. It is also becoming less affordable as landlords raise their rents.
- Providing \$4.6 million in additional resources to expand and improve Mobile Crisis Services. I love that money and training is being dedicated to the expansion and

improvement of the Mobile Crisis Services. I also believe that this training should be taught to regular police officers as well.

However, there are things that Governor Lamont's proposed budget does not address that are of concern to me:

This is a year where we need more. The existing budget already underfunds mental health services, and this budget does nothing to improve that situation. We need better than the status quo as we emerge from this pandemic.

If community non-profits lost funding, I'd be at home pacing back and forth with no place to go, no communication, no social life, and no one to talk to. They need support, so we need the funding for supporting our common ground supporters, community nonprofits need the money because if we don't have the community nonprofit money to help fund and support groups, clubhouses, case management, supporting our housing, clinical services, and peer support then we will have a crisis on our hands. We need to get funding and keep the community nonprofits up and running.

Transportation for the disabled and those with mental health differences need easier access to responsible and timely transportation to aid in everyday life, not just for medical appointments.

It is important that Mental Health receive more funding because your mental health is tied into your overall well-being.

Intercommunity was there for me when I was at my lowest. I was abused, and my son was abused by my ex-boyfriend. I needed support, and I received that support from Intercommunity. They had my back. They provided me with support, love, and assistance. To this day, I'm still with Intercommunity. They saved my life. If it wasn't for them, I'd be at home staring at 4 walls. Intercommunity focuses on mental health, primary care, and addiction recovery. They helped me to begin socializing with the outside world. I receive Community Support and mental health care from Intercommunity and without proper funding, they won't be able to help others who need it. I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety, I have arthritis, cervical disc disease which caused me to need a metal plate to be placed in my neck with 3 screws which is often painful, and lack of cartilage in both knees making moving everyday difficult. Mental health supports changed the course of my life and continue to help me survive.

In conclusion, mental health needs more overall funding, non-profits need more overall funding, transportation and housing should come with easier access and assistance.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak and share my (lived) experience with you about what this would mean to me, my loved ones, and the people I care about!